

National Fire Sprinkler Network

**Minutes of the Meeting
of the
National Fire Sprinkler Network
held on
6th January 2004
at
West Midlands Fire Service
Training Centre
Smethwick – West Midlands**

Present:

Officials:

Ronnie King
Glyn Evans

Network Vice Chair
Network Secretary

Members.

Hugh Adie
Brian Allan
Mark Barry
Graham Blight
Bill Boag-Munroe
Chris Boulton
Cllr. Barbara Belcher
Ken Bishop
Alan Brinson
Steve Bryant
Tony Carvell
Laurie Cox
Cllr. Dalmaine Dewgarde
Martyn Eastman
Prof. A. R. Everton
Maurice Everton
Les Fielding
Jo Fowler
Alison Gibb
Alex Gordon
Paul Hardy
Chris Hartrick
Paul Hollins
Peter Howard
Alan Kurnatowski
Glyn Jones
Derek Leech
Gareth Lloyd
Alan Longhurst
Steve Mills
Steve Mizon
Mike Painter
Julian Parsons
D. Pember-Finn
Andy Shaw

Strathclyde Fire Brigade
Arabact/FSA
Zurich Municipal
Avon Fire Brigade
Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service
Norfolk Fire Service
South Yorkshire Fire Authority
Wormald
European Fire Sprinkler Network
Mid & West Wales Fire & Rescue Service
Fire Brigades Union
Leicestershire Fire & Rescue Service
Norfolk County Council
South Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Service
University of Central Lancashire
Visitor
Wiltshire Fire Brigade
East Sussex Fire Brigade
Strathclyde Fire Brigade
Strathclyde Fire Brigade
Hertfordshire Fire & Rescue Service
Devon Fire and Rescue Service
Wormald Fire Systems
Cheshire Fire Service
Derbyshire Fire & Rescue Service
Essex County Fire & Rescue Service
Kent Fire Brigade
South Wales Fire Service
Mid and West Wales Fire Brigade
West Midlands Fire Service
Royal and Sun Alliance
Lancashire Fire & Rescue Service
Wiltshire Fire Brigade
Hereford & Worcester Fire Brigade
Derbyshire Fire & Rescue Service

John Sparke
John Wildish

Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service
Kent Fire Brigade

37 Network members and 2 Network officials were present.

1. **Welcome and Apologies**

The Vice Chair, Ronnie King, opened the Meeting at 10.30 hours; he welcomed all those present and wished them a Happy New Year. He thanked Chief Fire Officer Frank Sheehan and the West Midlands Fire Service for their hospitality and for providing the venue for the meeting. He said that as Peter Holland was unavoidably detained on brigade business and therefore had submitted his apologies to the meeting he would be assuming the Chair of the meeting on this occasion.

The Vice Chair then introduced Steve Mills of the West Midlands Fire Service who gave a safety briefing to the meeting. Following that the Vice Chair introduced and welcomed the Deputy Chief Fire Officer of the West Midlands Fire Service, Vijith Randeniya, to the Meeting and asked him to address the members present.

Vijith spoke of recent events in the West Midlands. The brigade had attended a major and multi million pound fire in an unsprinklered bakery only the day before the meeting which had resulted in a substantial part of the premises being destroyed by fire, the premises were forced to cease production which was affecting local bread supplies and a number of jobs at the bakery were under threat as a result of the fire.

He referred to the fire at the National Motorcycle Museum and said that the new museum which was to be built was to be sprinklered. The West Midlands Fire Service had co-operated with Sandwell MBC to create a schools sprinkler project following the recent loss of a large school building due to fire on the site of a major secondary school in Sandwell. The West Midlands fire service was to pay for sprinklers to be installed in a children's home where young fire setters were to be housed. Vish said that he had also had a domestic fire sprinkler system fitted in his own home as he felt that not only did it improve the safety of his family but we should show that we are prepared to practice what we preach.

The Vice Chair thanked Vijith for his very thought provoking contribution.

The Vice Chair then took apologies for non attendance.

The following apologies were noted:

Peter Holland	Network Chair
Peter Armstrong	British Automatic Sprinkler Association
Stewart Kidd	British Automatic Sprinkler Association
Richard Crook	Wormald
Adair Lewis	The Fire Protection Association
Jonathan O'Neill	The Fire Protection Association
Ian Targett	Fire Safety Development Group
Chris Blake	Hereford & Worcester
Steve Seaber	Hertfordshire Fire & Rescue Service
Michael Clapham MP	All Party Fire Safety Group
Jim Knight MP	All Party Fire Safety Group
John Judd	Greater Manchester County Fire Service
John Streets	Fire Service College

2. **Minutes of the Last Meeting.**

2.1 The Minutes of the Meeting of the 24th June 2003 were accepted as a true record.

3. **Matters Arising.**

3.1 There were no Matters Arising which were not included within the Meeting agenda.

4. Network Officials Report.

4.1 The Secretary introduced the following matters to the meeting;

- (a) The seminar held in September 2003 at Longleat House had been a major success and was very well attended with everyone being satisfied both with the dinner the evening before and the seminar itself. It had raised over £2,000 for the Network.
- (b) The Network Executive had met on the 9th December 2003 and agreed the following;
 - (i) that there should be one fundraising event every year. It was proposed to hold a seminar and luncheon in the Houses of Parliament in conjunction with the Federation of British Fire Organisations on the 21st June 2004. This would include an evening drinks reception on the terrace of the House of Commons. Network members will be kept advised of the event as the details emerge; and
 - (ii) that there should be a September/October 2004 meeting of the Network in Scotland probably held in conjunction with Strathclyde Fire Brigade, and a January 2005 meeting held in Wales; and
 - (iii) to recommend a policy on the fitting of sprinklers to the Network members as set out below;

That within the ambit of the aspirations of the Network, it should pursue a policy that all;

- ***new domestic dwellings, and***
- ***new residential care premises, and***
- ***houses in multiple occupation seeking registration or licensing for the first time, and***
- ***new schools, or existing schools either proven to be at a high risk of fire or undergoing a major refurbishment,***

should be fitted with a life safety sprinkler system conforming to the appropriate British Standard or British Standard Draft for Development during the course of their construction or, in the case of existing school buildings, their refurbishment. In the case of existing buildings any recommendation for the provision of a life safety sprinkler system should be made on the basis of a fire safety risk assessment.

This proposal was put to the Network members present and was agreed by them.

- (iv) it was accepted that many of the Network's leaflets were out of date in terms of contact information for the Network. However, in view of the paucity of funds it was agreed that they should continue to be distributed. A newsletter was discussed but once again its production rested entirely upon the Secretary's workload. It was agreed that the Web Site would have to become the primary method of sending out information to the Network members.
- (c) The Secretary reported that he had met with Michael J. Foster MP – Hastings and Rye on the 4th December 2003 who, following discussions with the Chief Fire Officer of East Sussex, wished to put forward a 10 Minute Rule Bill on the fitting of sprinklers in domestic premises and HMO's. The Secretary said he had advised the MP and his researcher on the form that this might take but since the meeting he had heard nothing further. It was hoped to lay the Bill before Christmas, but this had not happened. The Secretary said he would pursue the matter.
- (d) The Secretary reported that on the 16th December 2003 he, Peter Holland and Steve Seaber, had a brief meeting with Phil Hope MP (Junior Minister at the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister) and his officials from the Buildings Division to discuss sprinklers. This had been a very positive meeting with a lot of positive reaction from Phil Hope. It was clear however, that the review of Approved

Document (B) would be the vehicle that would provide the impetus for the greater use of sprinklers as far as government was concerned.

- (e) The Secretary commented that details of the BRE/FRS Report on the Effectiveness of Residential Sprinklers were starting to emerge. It appeared that the report was pretty much to be expected in terms of the effectiveness of sprinklers and vindicated the faith that people had in them as a life saving factor in fires. However, concerns were being expressed about the fact that pendant heads had been tested and not concealed heads which were far more used in domestic and residential installations. Tony Carvell from the FBU said he had been a member of the Steering Group for the project and this factor had been raised with the BRE staff running the project. It was understood however that ODPM Buildings Division intended to deal with the issue.

5. Treasurers Report

- 5.1 The Treasurer produced a spreadsheet of income and expenditure which showed that when all outstanding receipts were finally collected in from the fund raising dinner and seminar at Longleat House and all outgoings and expenses for officials had been met, the Network would have slightly in excess of £2,000 in the bank.
- 5.2 Whilst this increase in funds was clearly welcome compared to the financial situation earlier in the year, it was realistically not a great deal of money to do everything that the Network wanted to achieve.

6. Water Policy Group Report.

- 6.1 The Secretary gave a brief report upon the progress of the Water Policy Group. He said that at their September meeting they had reached an impasse where no agreement could be reached between the two sides upon one paragraph within the draft document. The problem related primarily to the question of fraudulent abstraction of water which then linked into the question of direct connections to the water mains and the metering of water supplies for domestic and residential sprinkler systems.
- 6.2 One of the members of the Group, Phillip Mills of Water UK, had agreed to place the issue before the November 2003 meeting of the Water UK Council too see if they could break the deadlock. The Secretary said that he had subsequently received a message from Phillip Mills that had led him to believe there now could be a further meeting and the deadlock may be broken. That Meeting has now been set for the 2nd February 2004.

7. Reports of Progress and Activities – Constituent Organisations.

7.1 Hereford and Worcester Fire Brigade.

The Service continues to pursue the fitting of sprinklers in schools in the county.

7.2 West Midlands Fire Service.

Concern was expressed over the cost effectiveness of domestic sprinklers findings of the BRE Report. In Wolverhampton a relaxation for fire safety works in a residential premises had been granted upon the fitting of sprinklers. A report on the National Motorcycle Museum fire was given.

7.3 European Fire Sprinkler Network.

The following issues are current in Europe, tunnels, care homes and hotels. There is to be a conference in Sweden on transport fires in tunnels – 200 megawatt fires quite likely in LGV's. An EU Parliamentary Question has been laid regarding the EC Directive on hotels. EUROFEU star fire rating system proposed for hotels. France has produced written guidance to the use of sprinklers in residential care homes.

7.4 Norfolk Fire Service

The Service has introduced a display unit for fires involving Christmas trees, since using it there has been a number of inquiries from Local Authorities regarding sprinklers. Schools continue to be a priority.

7.5 **Fire Brigades Union.**

It had been reported by one of their members that Thames Water had fitted pressure monitoring devices to some of their mains in the Oxfordshire area. These devices monitor the mains pressure if they sense a sudden drop in mains pressure the device assumes that a leak is occurring and reduces the water pressure in the affected area further to prevent excessive water loss. There was concern that this system might affect towns mains fed sprinkler systems.

7.6 **Devon.**

The Brigade ran a multi agency community safety seminar to discuss IRMP's, HMO's, Sprinklers and fire safety enforcement. They invited the Directors of Housing, Environmental Health, Building Control and representatives from the fire alarm companies. They have a sprinkler demonstration road show. A four storey hotel has been fitted with sprinklers as an alternative to providing an external fire escape staircase. In Plymouth four residential blocks of flats are to be sprinklered. The Brigade is lobbying for six proposed PFI project schools in Exeter to be sprinklered. The brigade is also lobbying for two housing schemes in East Devon and Plymouth to be sprinklered.

7.7 **Avon Fire Brigade**

The Brigade now have a sprinkler policy in place.

Sprinkler projects agreed or under discussion in the following areas of Avon;

South Gloucestershire	1 project - Major retailer
Bath and North East Somerset	7 projects
Bristol	4 projects – 1 retail, 1 industrial, and 2 hotels
Southmead	50 sheltered accommodation flats
North Somerset	6 projects – 5 retail and 1 community project.

7.8 **East Sussex Fire Brigade.**

Nil Report.

7.9 **Cheshire Fire Brigade.**

Two fires in a major retailer's stores. One fire cost over £5 million as store not sprinklered. Second store was sprinklered and the fire was extinguished by one sprinkler head. One school destroyed by fire a member from the Local Authority is now working with the fire authority. A social housing development of 100 houses is to be sprinklered.

7.10 **South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service**

The Brigade has a sprinkler unit which they demonstrated to the local Coroner's; as a result Coroners are now starting to ask if a sprinkler system would have saved the lives of people who have died in fires. Sheffield Education Department has set up a research project with Hallam University in Sheffield to investigate the viability of sprinklers in schools. It is hoped that this independent report will support the greater use of sprinklers. Sprinkler Network members were also urged to contact their local Ward members and speak to them on the greater use of sprinklers in schools.

7.11 **Wiltshire Fire Brigade.**

There is potential for sprinklers to be fitted in Care Home in Swindon following request for advice from the home owners. Swindon MP Julia Drown is supporting Wiltshire Fire Brigade in its recommendation to

provide sprinkler protection in the extensive development planned for South Swindon. Wiltshire Fire Brigade's Chief Fire Officer is also encouraging support from the Combined Fire Authority and other local politicians regarding this.

A Tunnel Design & Safety Consultation (Fire Suppression) Sub Group has been established by the Highways Agency to further investigate the possibility of installing fire suppression systems in the proposed A 303 Stonehenge and A 3 Hindhead Tunnels.

Various options are being considered, including:

- Traditional deluge
- Low pressure water mist
- High pressure water mist
- Impulse water cannons (IFEX)
- Compressed Air Foam (1-7 CAF)

7 PFI schools in Swindon will now go ahead with the provision of Sprinklers.

Les Fielding met with the General Secretary of the Society for Electrical and Mechanical Engineers (ScEME), Charles Tanswell, in August 2003. ScEME Members predominantly provide engineering services for Local Authority Education establishments. Concern was expressed with the current campaign for the provision of sprinklers in schools and the lack of consultation with ScEME as a stakeholder in providing safe solutions for our schools. This information was passed to Stewart Kidd who has since arranged for Mark Barry from Zurich Municipal to attend a ScEME Meeting.

7.12 Essex County Fire & Rescue Service.

Essex County Council has had a policy for a year or so of fitting sprinklers to new schools and major extensions to existing. Unfortunately when they adopted the policy they didn't increase the building programme budget to take account of the cost of sprinkler installations. Consequently the additional cost of sprinklers, all be it relatively small, has to come from other projects. Understandably head teachers and school governors protest when they are told that their school's refurbishment or other work is postponed as the funds have been diverted to pay for the sprinklers in a new school.

A recent meeting has taken place with one of the County's engineer's who has been asked to review the sprinkler policy, with a view to possibly taking a risk assessment approach to installing sprinklers. This appears to be in line with draft proposals in the proposed DfES Building Bulletin 7 document. One of the reasons for the review is the difference between the original projected costs and subsequent added building costs.

Of the last two schools to be built, one had sprinklers the other was built without as the cost was too high.

The difference in costs seems to be mainly down to two factors:

- Additional building works e.g. tanks and pump housings, etc.
- Sprinklers being included late in the design stage. Large roof and ceiling voids etc. that could have been designed out at earlier stages have to be provided with sprinklers.

7.13 Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service

The Chief Education Officer advised elected members that a school fire was too large to be controlled by sprinklers. The members allowed the Fire Authority to contest that advice.

7.15 Mid and West Wales.

A guide for fire safety in HMO's in Wales which has been developed by Housing Officers in Wales and contains all the design freedoms offered by fitting sprinklers has been sent to the Welsh Assembly Government. The Welsh Assembly Government has paid around £270,000 to retrofit sprinklers in an existing school. A number of Welsh LEA's have adopted sprinklers in all new schools policies.

7.16 **Strathclyde Fire Brigade.**

It is proposed to hold a seminar for LEA members, LEA officers and architects about fitting sprinklers in new schools. The brigade has also offered to speak to the 12 unitary authorities in Strathclyde on sprinklers and hold a seminar later in the year.

7.17 **Wormald.**

Wormald's have produced a CD ROM on fires in schools. They have produced 2000 copies and are sending them out to all Community Fire Safety Offices free of charge. The CD contains all the information on sprinklers in schools from a number of companies. Contact Ken Bishop to obtain copies at Wormald's Manchester site to obtain copies.

8 Any Other Business.

- 8.1 The Secretary reported that due to the Network Email address receiving a large amount of unwanted advertising material (SPAM) some of which was most unpleasant, he had amended the Emailing instructions on his computer so that it would not automatically send receipts to persons requesting them. He asked Members not to request receipts unless there really was a need for them.
- 8.2 The Secretary reported that he had made contact with an organisation called Firebrake which had been created by funding from the Welsh Assembly Government to develop community fire safety issues in Wales. The people at Firebrake are very anxious to develop contacts with the fire community and also develop mutual projects in Wales. The details in respect of Firebrake are attached to these Minutes.
- 8.3 There being no other business the Vice Chair brought the meeting to a close. He did again make a plea to the members of the Network to submit their reports to the Secretary in a Word document format via Email and prior to Network meetings, as it made the preparation of the Minutes that much quicker and accurate.

All members please note.

10. Date of Next Meeting.

The date of the next meeting is;

[29th March 2004 in Bristol](#)

[commencing 12.30 pm](#)

[at Avon Fire Brigade Training Centre.](#)

THE END

